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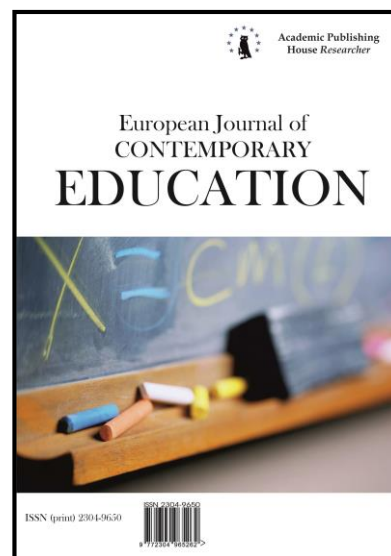
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How Students Acquire Self-Control: Primary School Teachers' Concepts from Turkey

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Abstract

Self-control is a basic skill which enables individuals to be happy and successful, and it can and needs to be improved through education. One of the objectives of maintaining discipline in a classroom is to facilitate students in developing self-control, and the opinions of teachers may be taken into account regarding this. Moreover, teachers have a crucial role in helping students to develop these skills. The aim of our work is to assess how Turkish primary school teachers can help students acquire these skills. The research was conducted using data from one hundred and three primary school teachers from ten schools in Bolu, Turkey, utilising a screening model. Two sample events relating to how students can acquire self-control were given to teachers in a form. The opinions of the teachers were then represented visually as sector charts using a computer algebra system Mathematica v.10, based on the data provided.

Keywords: self-control, self-discipline, classroom discipline, teacher behaviour, primary school, classroom management.

1. Introduction

The economic, social, cultural and political development of a country depends on the quality of the population the country raises. One of the factors affecting this quality is classroom management by teachers and especially teachers' disciplinary approach in the classroom. Classroom management can be analysed in five dimensions as the physical order of a classroom environment, plan-program activities, activities for time management, arrangement of relationships and the regulation of attitudes (Başar, 1994). There have been many definitions

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within the framework of classroom management in addition to recent significant works in this area by Turkish researchers. With these definitions kept in mind, classroom management enables students to achieve the educational aim of the course (Özyürek, 2001; Gündüz et al., 2004; Erden, 2008) removes obstacles that prevent teachers and students from studying (Özsoy, 2003; Başar, 1994), provides and sustains an appropriate learning environment for the students (Özsoy, 2003; Karip, 2003; Gündüz et al., 2004), provides supervision and guidance of behaviour (Özyürek, 2001; Çelik, 2002; Erden, 2008), enables students to participate in activities (Özsoy, 2003; Başar, 1994; Şişman, 1999), prevents unfavourable attitudes (Şişman, 1999), maintains motivation (Karip, 2003), enables instructional periods to be used appropriately (Özsoy, 2003; Başar, 1994; Sarıtaş, 2000; Çelik, 2002; Şişman, 1999; Karip 2003), manages resources and students well (Özsoy, 2003) helps interaction to be used effectively (Özyürek, 2001; Sarıtaş, 2000; Karip, 2003), to designate classroom rules (Çelik, 2002; Karip, 2003), arranges the physical environment (Şişman, 1999; Karip 2003; Özyürek, 2001), and it is also instrumental in helping students to control themselves emotionally and behaviourally (Celep, 2000).

To remove obstacles in the way of studying, the supervision and guidance of attitudes, and to prevent unfavourable behaviours is the definition of classroom management in relation to discipline. Discipline is defined as: to teach favorable behavior to the student and make sure that the student practices it (Başaran, 1983). Teacher reaction to student behavior, which disturbs the learning environment and prevents learning experiences (Ünal & Ada, 2000; Karip, 2003), the rules, provisions and precautions that are set in place to provide a harmonious living environment for people who have come together with shared common goals (Sarıtaş, 2000), to get behaviour under control in order to have individuals and groups reach their goals (Büyükkaragöz et al., 1994), to provide education to help people acquire internal control (Başaran, 1989), precautions that are taken to enable people to abide by the general conduct of the society in which they live, and employ behavior appropriate to the rules and law (Demiray, 1980), order that is formed within the individual and effectuated with his/her own will (Eren, 1989), to teach children favorable behavior and habits, and to provide a chance for moral development, which means controlling oneself or developing internal control (Yavuzer, 1998), the teacher's best way of showing reactions to unwanted student behavior (Borich, 1996).

Discipline does not mean punishment. Discipline, which means “to educate” in Latin, is more often used to teach youth to comprehend and develop self-control, and to teach these rules with love and within explicit principles (Thompson, 1996). There have been many definitions of discipline. Some of the concepts which are observed within these definitions may be evaluated. These concepts are: unwanted behavior, the student's self-control, the application of rules, establishment of a learning environment, participation in appropriate learning activities, teacher reaction to unwanted behavior, the increase in the period of learning, and teaching responsibility (Aydın, 2002).

Discipline in classroom has been the topic of many research projects especially in recent years. The reason might be that about two million students a year are suspended from school due to problems in the classroom emanating from their behavior (Allen, 2005) and many teachers leave the profession due to the stress of classroom management (Robbins, 2010). Discipline in traditional classroom management is based on a behavioral approach, and relies on the guidance of a teacher. A system of rewards and results lead the student to behave. This limits the need for self-discipline (Freiberg et al., 2009). However, according to some theorists, it does not explicitly require students to develop self-control, which in time they must learn for themselves. To provide an example, according to a humanist approach, instead of guiding the behavior of students, it is necessary to get rid of the reasons for the poor behavior. In order to do that teachers and administrators must change their perception of a student. The first step in developing student self-control is for teachers to be able to understand events from the perspective of the students (Combs, 1985).

What is the desired human profile? Do we want to raise individuals with limited experiences of creating and taking initiatives, and are submissive and obedient or do we want to develop free thinking individuals who discipline themselves (Freiberg et al., 2009)? Depending on the answer to this question, the perception of maintaining discipline in the classroom will vary.

The objectives of discipline may be defined differently by different researchers. The aim of discipline is not “to punish”, but “to teach” students to maintain their self-control (Cummings, 2000). Laursen (2003) talks about two objectives of discipline: “1. To provide children with a safe

and consistent environment where they can learn rational rules, limitations and consequences, 2. To develop self-discipline and self-control”.

The aim of the discipline is to facilitate all students in building better relationships with each other, learning easily, guiding themselves more and taking responsibilities (Charles, 2008). One of the primary aims of a national education system is to develop self discipline. Self-discipline means individual's undertaking moral responsibilities of his/her own behavior and carry them out with his/her own will (Bear et al., 2008).

When the aims of discipline are analyzed, one the key concepts is self-control. Self-control contributes to a classroom environment where unfavorable behavior does not take place without the intervention of the teacher.

Self-control, disciplining oneself, guiding oneself, auto control, managing oneself, inner control, self-inspection, inner discipline, and self-order are interchangeable concepts. Self-control is a person's ability to overcome basic emotional reactions and instincts. A person with this skill can manage and moderate their emotions. Clear thinking can be employed and the individual person can focus on what to do and achieve the best outcome under pressure (Akbaş, 2006; Okur, 2008).

Just like critical thinking, problem solution, entrepreneurship, and communication, self-control is one of the characteristics expected from the people in modern society. Borba defines moral intelligence as a student's appropriate behavior and one of seven features that provides an individual with the ability to manage pressures that potentially can harm the character of a person (Charles, 2008). These seven basic features are empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and honesty. To Borba, the first three features form the essence of morality.

Self-discipline, that is an individual's knowledge of oneself, is the ability to decide on appropriate action without the necessity of someone intervening. Students must be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them in order to develop and maintain their own discipline, which paves the way for their social and emotional development (Freiberg et al., 2009).

Classes must meet the expectations (innovation, individualism, initiative, self-control) of the new century. Education, in Information Age, is different for our students. It must be built on the principle of mutual respect and interest. It must be focused on teaching students responsibilities and self-discipline (McLeod, 2003). Individuals, whose self-control is high, are more successful in limiting unwanted stimulations, keeping expressions of emotions under control, sustaining attention and fulfilling tasks that are not enjoyable but important for learning (Bertrams & Oliver, 2009). Students are taught certain skills which are social and academic. Self-discipline is perhaps the most significant skills in paving the way for students to be successful (Lane et al., 2004). According to Arıcak et al. (2005), the most reliable way of preserving and maintaining discipline in the classroom is to raise individuals whose self-discipline is developed.

To teach students self-control and responsibility is the most important role of a teacher. These skills are necessary not only in schools but also in democratic social life. Time and effort must be spent to teach our students how to be self-reliant, free and productive individuals in the society (McLeod, 2003).

Students do not come to the classroom with their self-control and self-governance skills completely formed (McLeod, 2003). To Gordon, it is possible for students to develop self-control in the classroom (Charles, 2008). Furthermore, self-control is a characteristic that teachers and parents say “if only, we could gain to our children/students”.

Turkey today is very different from that of previous decades. There have been radical developments and changes in education from the primary school to high school level and wider society as a whole. Students and parents show different characteristics from students and parents of previous generations. Students no longer carry out every instruction given by teachers and parents say and they are no longer accepting of punishment if they do not fulfill what is required of them. Today's generation of students is aware of their rights and does not readily accept authority. Individuality is at the fore. When students are faced with a problem concerning a teacher, the parents use open communication channels. Therefore, teachers must learn, develop and practice new methods of maintaining discipline. Old methods are insufficient in light of the behavior of the new generation. Old problems require new solutions just like new problems demand new approaches. Most importantly these approaches must be a way to maintain self-control of the students.

Aim of the Research: this research aims to designate how teachers can enable their students to acquire the skills of self-control.

Research question: What are the current opinions of teachers regarding the ability of primary school students to maintain self-control?

2. Methods

Participants

The research sample consisted of teachers with a first degree selected from four primary schools in Bolu, Turkey. A total of 103 teachers from 10 schools took part in the research. During the time period in which the study was conducted, compulsory education consisted of 8 years in Turkey. Class teachers taught the grades of 1–5. In grades 6–8, branch teachers would teach. The data in this study was gathered through class teachers in the 1–5 grades. In Bolu, there are almost eight hundred teachers, and sixty elementary schools. The teachers employed in the districts were not included.

Data Collection Tool

In the research, the primary school teachers were presented with two sample events in relation to students' maintenance of self-control and were then asked as to what type of reactions are to be shown. The first sample events and question was “as a teacher while you are not in the classroom, what do you think is required to be done to in order have your students continue their studies as if, the teacher is in the classroom?”, and the second sample event and question was “as a teacher, what do you think that should be done to have your students go to their desks themselves without their teachers warning them “go in” when the bell rings?”. The researcher distributed the form consisting of the 2 questions to 103 teachers from 10 schools and collected the completed forms.

Analysis of Data

A Content Analysis method was used to analyse the data set. The statements of the teachers were encoded in the research. Percentages of the encoded statements were illustrated in the captions of the diagrams relating to the figures. There were teachers who answered the two questions completely as well as those who left them blank or gave more than a single answer. Along with a specialist, the researcher carried out the encoding process.

3. Findings

The findings relating to the sample events presented to the teachers are illustrated in Fig. 1 and 2. The first figure shows the opinions of the teachers who asked their students to continue with their work as if the teacher was present in the classroom; the second figure includes opinions about the students who are expected to take their place without a warning to 'go in'.

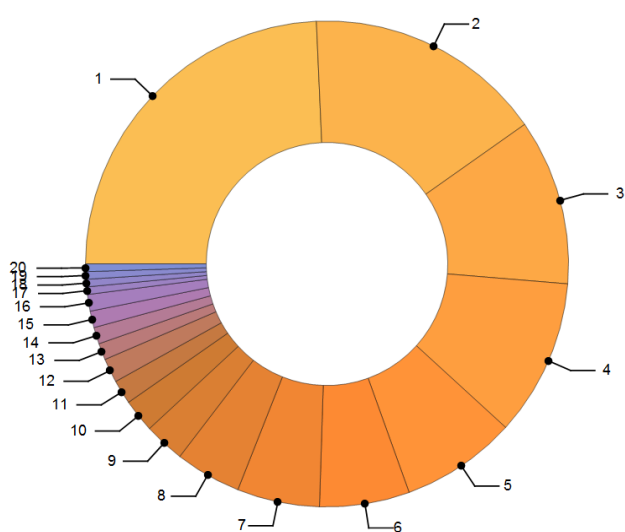


Figure 1. 1. Assigning tasks to students (interesting homework, giving test or worksheet) (24.2 %). 2. Having students acquire sense of responsibility (15.9 %). 3. Having students perceive the significance of the teacher and the activity (11 %). 4. Giving a student or a group the task of supervising (10.4 %). 5. Designating the rules with the students and letting

students adopt the rules (7.7 %). 6. Having students adopt habit recreational activities (6 %). 7. Teaching students what to do when the teacher is not in the classroom (5.5 %). 8. Rewarding students when they complete their tasks (4.4 %). 9. Stating the confidence in students (2.7 %). 10. Explaining that they have no rights to disturb their friends and others in the classroom (2.2 %). 11. Teacher's request from students not to make the teacher upset and that teacher statement that he/she becomes happy when the students behave appropriately (1.6 %). 12. Adopting this habit in Grade-1 (1.6 %). 13. Paying attention to students demonstrating exemplary behavior (1.1 %). 14. Believing that behavior must be taught in the family (1.1 %). 15. Requesting students to remain silent after explaining the reason of not being in the classroom (1.1 %). 16. Preparing classroom environment in a way that appeals to the students (letting them watch slide show, preparing corners of activity applications such as journal, newspaper) (1.1 %). 17. Seeking help of colleagues (0.5 %). 18. Asking them to show empathy (0.5 %). 19. Saying that he/she will come to check (0.5 %). 20. Stating that the behaviors will be evaluated with grades (0.5 %).

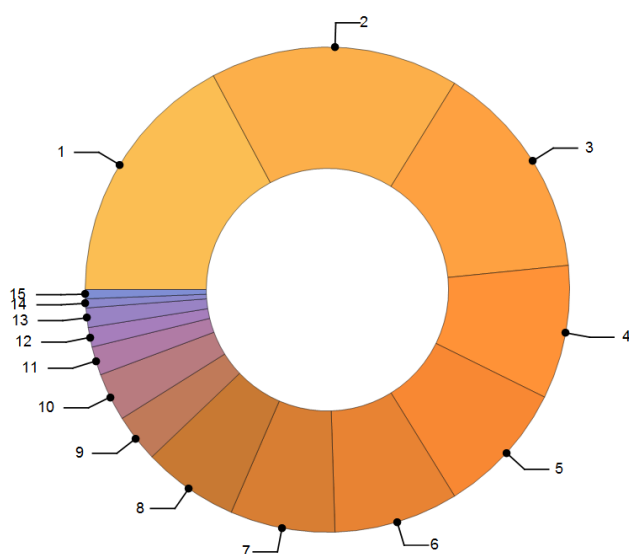


Figure 2. 1. Preparing classroom rules with the students (17.2 %). 2. Explaining the reason and significance of going in when the bell rings (16.6 %). 3. Rewarding (thanking students coming to class on time) (14.6 %). 4. Having them perceive the significance of going in before the teacher and preparing for the lesson (8.9 %). 5. Making the lesson fun (8.3 %). 6. Punishment (asking the reason by yelling, assigning homework of extra writing) (8.3 %). 7. Adopting this habit in Grade-1 (7 %). 8. Teacher's punctuality in going to class (6.4 %). 9. Having them be aware of using time efficiently (3.2 %). 10. Assigning student(s) in coming to class on time (3.2 %). 11. Typifying the students showing exemplary behavior (1.9 %). 12. Warning students to prepare for the next lesson (1.3 %). 13. Having the tone of bell sound in a way to attract the attention of the students (1.3 %). 14. Continuously checking the students in the process of having the students adopt this behavior (0.6 %). 15. Individual talking to students who do not abide by the behavior (0.6 %).

4. Discussion

Assigning tasks to students while teacher is not present in the classroom may contribute to the students' acquisition of self-control. Students may adopt the skill of self-control by the teacher giving responsibilities to the students first in the classroom and then outside the classroom.

Giving students set tasks such as a test, homework or worksheet is in a way to give students responsibilities. It is important for students to be held responsible for certain behaviors as a way of learning and gaining self-control. Responsibility is child's fulfillment of his/her tasks in accordance with the age, gender and level of development starting from the early childhood ages (Yavuzer, 1998). According to Jones, the teachers, who want their students to gain more sense of responsibility, often assign their students tasks of arranging classroom materials, helping

maintenance of plants and animal care, etc. on a more regular basis (Charles, 2008). When the literary background is analysed, the occasions that allow students to have responsibilities are stated as to helping to designate classroom rules and procedures and additionally to help student obey them. This produces rational results enabling classroom harmony, helping students to participate in designation of academic objectives, choose learning activities, study with groups, study independently in the class, study independently outside the class, evaluate the behaviors of the peers, assist the peers in correcting their behavior, and to take part in class meetings (Duke & Jones, 1985; Yurtal & Yontar, 2006). Yurtal and Yontar (2006) found out in their research that teachers want their students to fulfill individual studies, homework-project and group studies but most of all to adopt a habit of responsibility.

In Aydın's (2009) similar research project on second degree teachers, it can also be seen that assigning tasks and responsibilities to students is one of the primary methods employed in the development their self-control. However, the first degree teachers stated the primary importance of the 'teachers' arrival to class on time and thus being a positive role model along with the use of rewards at the beginning of the process as being of great importance.

Kounin attributes the success of democratic teachers to their unification of independence and responsibility (Charles, 1996). Furthermore, he states that giving responsibility may contribute to the self-discipline. Ginott defines discipline as guiding oneself, a small series of achievements that form responsibility and lead to interest in study (Charles, 1996). Glasser states that self-discipline and responsibility help students to reach the required level of independence (Charles, 1996).

Specificity of rules is a significant device that gives students information about how they are expected to behave in the classroom. However, it is arguable whether the rules are to be set by the teachers or the students. For instance, Canter states that the rules must be set by the teachers and that it is necessary to teach these rules (Charles, 1996). On the other hand, setting the rules with the students input helps students to take responsibility for their behavior (Bakioğlu, 2009). Setting the rules at the beginning of the academic year, in a way, contributes to the self-control of the students.

Teachers also stated that the application of award and punishment systems in help students adopt habits self-control. There are different opinions on the use of reward and punishment. To illustrate this point, Gordon thinks that reward and punishment frameworks are largely devised for external inspection (Charles, 1996). External inspection harms students and inhibits their ability to gain self-control. According to the behavioral approach, self-control can be gained by using reinforce. Here, teachers have to get to know their students and decide as to which is the most effective reaction.

Assigning tasks to a student while the teacher is not in the classroom may cause the deterioration of the relationship between the student and his friends. If the students are to remain silent without doing anything and the assigned student is to write the names of the students, who are talking, "on the board or on a piece of paper" to be submitted to the teacher on their return and then if the students, whose names are listed, receive punishment from the teacher, the relationship between the assigned student and those who receive punishment will worsen. Moreover, assigning a student as an inspector to control other students externally, may not contribute to the acquisition of self-control.

Teachers must be role models to students with their own behavior. To Redl and Wattenberg, one of the key aspects of teaching is to be a role model in the classroom (Charles, 1996). To Ginott, students must maintain discipline themselves before teachers discipline them (Charles, 1996). The teachers' role as a model may contribute to the students' adoption of self-control.

In the research, some of the teachers used the statement of "explaining the reason and significance of going in when the bell rings". However, when teachers tell the students what to do and therefore solve their problems, it may cause students to be dependent on others for their actions. Dependence may harm the students' development of self-control. For instance, a primary school teachers' warning of "it is cold outside, do not forget your jacket" is an explanation and allows them to avoid taking the decision themselves. If on the other hand, a teachers says "look at outside, what should you do in order to protect yourself" it may help students to explore the appropriate solution (Charles, 2008). Additionally, teachers' introducing an element of fun into the decision making process may pave the way for the students to be able to guide their own behavior willingly and thus gain develop self-control.

Bear et al. (2008) recommends the following strategies and techniques to develop self-discipline; unconditional affinity, show respect and support, include adolescents into the process of decision making, include parents in the process, model to students the qualifications and characteristics you desire them to show, take individual differences into account, emphasize that the individual is responsible from his own conduct, use reward and punishment, try to get your students acquire social and emotional efficiencies within the process of teaching, and do not forget that they are adolescent and can only operate within the parameters of their age group.

It is also stated by teachers that self-control must be gained within the family setting. To Erikson, the period between 18 months and 3 years in terms of the student developing feelings of shame/doubt weighed against their own autonomy (Wolfolk, 2007) is critical. This period is the beginning of self-control and self-confidence for the individual. This is the period in which children need to develop skills such as eating and going to bathroom by themselves. If the parents, because of their worries or distractions, use commands such as “do not run, you may fall; do not eat by yourself, you may pour” or “too little he/she may be harmed”. Or if they act on behalf of the children and overprotect, the child may doubt his/her own skills. Furthermore, if autonomy does not develop, the child begins to carry out conducts that his/her parents command, which then prevents the child from adopting self-control.

5. Conclusion

This research is aimed at exploring self-control of school students, which is one of the key objectives of maintaining classroom discipline. In the research, opinions of primary school first degree teachers were sought and analyzed.

Self-control is one of the basic skills which helps individuals to be happy and successful, and it needs and can be improved through education. Teachers have a crucial role in enabling students to gain and develop these skills. Teachers may help students to gain self-control skills by giving responsibilities to them, cooperating with students to make classroom rules, helping students to adopt healthy free time habits, explaining the reasons and importance of the expected behavior, and using reward systems.

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